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The Two-Year War between Two Strategic Allies in the Horn of Africa

Muchie, Mammo

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Mammo Muchie

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The Secretariat
Research Center on Development and International Relations
att: Secretary Marianne Hoegsbro
Fibigerstraede 2
Aalborg University
DK-9220 Aalborg East
Denmark

Tel. + 45 96 35 98 10
Fax. + 45 98 15 32 98

E-mail: hoegsbro@i4.auc.dk or jds@i4.auc.dk
Homepage: www.i4.auc.dk/development

Imagining Ethiopia Beyond War and Poverty: The two-year war between two strategic allies in the Horn of Africa

Mammo Muchie¹

WE ARE OUTRAGED, THEREFORE WE ARE!

Albert Camus

This article is based largely on an adaptation of the article on “Neither Fair, nor Just: the Algiers “peace agreement” between Ethiopia and Eritrea. (EtR, Vol.7, July/August issue, 2000)

Abstract

The modern conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia is rooted in the European scramble for Africa that took place after the Treaty of Berlin in 1885. Ethiopia, though largely non-colonised by Europe in spite of repeated attempts, has been a victim of the European partition of Africa. Eritrea came into existence in 1890 after Italy's take over of the Red Sea coast. After World War II, the Great Powers (USA, Britain, France and the USSR) disposed of the former Italian colonies with Eritrea ceded to Ethiopia after a care-taker British military administration for ten years. After a decade of federated relationship with Ethiopia, the Emperor of Ethiopia acceded to uniting Eritrea with Ethiopia demanded by the pro- unionist opinion in Eritrea. The independence- seeking Eritrean opinion balked. An armed resistance followed which has gone on and off until the twenty- first century. That resistance that began in 1962 ended up with the re-partition of Ethiopia in 1991-'93. After seven years of relative calmness, a war erupted in May 1998. On June 15, 2000 a “peace agreement” was signed by the two states. This article discusses the two phases of the recent conflict:

- a) the phase of war May 1998- June 2000, and*
- b) the difficulties of the peace agreement for building a positive and lasting peace.*

The article suggests that, far from damming turmoil and violence, the peace agreement may open the region to further conflict. We have not seen the end of the Eritrean and Ethiopian conflict yet. This, in spite of the fact the main victims of the protracted conflict- the people on both sides- are weary and wish to leave in peace.

¹ Mammo Muchie is Associate Professor at Research Center on Development and International Relations, Aalborg University, Denmark.

Introduction:

In 1991 the Tigryan Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) took power in Ethiopia and agreed to the Eritrean People liberation Front (EPLF) to declare a provisional government in Eritrea. Between 1991 and 1993, the ground was prepared for an amicable separation of Eritrea from Ethiopia. The friendship between the two Governments seemed so cosy as to blind them to tidy some issues that caught up with them seven years later. The first was determining the southern border of Eritrea from Ethiopia. The second was the agreement on the use of the Red Sea port of Assab.

The conflict has been classified as an inter-state war over the border. It started with the armed action and forcible removal of the Tigryan state administration officials by the Eritrean army. Ethiopia responded by ground and air attack. Eritrea reciprocated by bombing hospitals and schools in Mekelle and seizing a number of border towns from Zela Anbessa to Bure. The Ethiopian army managed to remove the Eritrean army from Badme, but failed to move out Eritrean armed forces from the Torana, Bure and Zelanbessa fronts.

Ethiopia insisted that Eritrea has violated its state sovereignty. Eritrea claimed that the Tigryan State has violated its state sovereignty, initially by drawing maps that included parts of Eritrea to Ethiopia. The origin of who started the conflict, which started the armed attack, who started the aerial bombing and who aggravated the situation has been contested. Each denies it has started the fighting and gingerly/eagerly makes the other side culpable. The only time a clear responsibility for action was owned was during the latest offensive in May 2000. Ethiopia claimed that it wanted Eritrea out of all the areas it has occupied. The fighting took place. Eritrea's army retreated and all the occupied land was re-claimed by the Ethiopian side. It appeared Ethiopia got by military action what it was not able to have through diplomatic action over two years.

For two years all the mediators could not manage to get the conflicting parties to budge. Eritrea insisted on a cease-fire and a de-militarised zone over the disputed areas. Ethiopia insisted that Eritrea evacuate unconditionally from all occupied territories. Ethiopia insisted further that it would not enter into direct face to face talks until Eritrea's army moved out of Ethiopian occupied land lock, stock and barrel.

Finally the military action by Ethiopia unfroze the diplomatic stalemate. Eritrea withdrew from the lands it occupied along a 600km border under pressure of armed action and the door was open for fruitful negotiation. After two weeks of negotiations between May 29 and June 14, 2000, the conflicting parties agreed to reach a "peace agreement."

The question is whether the agreement will build the peace or prepare conditions for future conflict. The larger question is when is Ethiopia likely to be on a trajectory free from the degrading grips of violence and poverty?

Pointing out Dangers in the peace- making process

First let me concentrate on the recent “peace agreement” and its problems. In an article entitled **“From a Punch up to a Patch-up: A Spiteful Transition to the Peace”**² I anticipated a danger to the region in concluding what some have described justifiably as this “content-less war” between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Now that the preliminary outlines of a peaceful transition has set in, it is time to count the hard gains and losses with respect to establishing the foundations of peace and stability in the entire region of the Horn of Africa. My anxiety that all will end as a “patch –up” bearing the real possibility of future turmoil appears to have been lent credence by the recent ‘peace agreement’ signed by the foreign ministers of Ethiopia and Eritrea in Algiers. This took place after a protracted negotiation between May 29 to June 14 and concluded with a 15-point peace plan.³

Theories of conflict resolution and peace studies are relevant to shed light on the period of war and the ensuing peace-making phase between Eritrea and Ethiopia.^{*} The conflict has its origin in the 19th century Scramble for Africa. Ethiopian emperors contested the claims by the European powers to the province that provided them maritime access. They were not able to withstand the European pressure and signed unequal treaties. Claims by Ethiopia to incorporate Somalia and Eritrea were hotly disputed by Italy and the Great Powers. After so many diplomatic struggles, Ethiopia and Eritrea were federated in 1952. The Emperor abrogated the federation on advice from Eritrean nobles in 1962 through a majority of the federal parliament of Eritrea. Since then there has been armed activity against Ethiopia by Eritrean groups which were assisted by the neighbouring Arab states for a long time. In 1991, the Ethiopian Government led by Major Mengistu Haile Mariam collapsed and Eritrea became independent in 1993. War erupted in May 1998. Between May 29 and June 14, the regime which I have called “Wayne”⁴ in Ethiopia and the one in Eritrea

² **Ethiopian Register**, Vol.6, no.5, May 1999

³ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/africa7/newssid>

⁴ Woyanne has become the popularly used name by Ethiopians. It is a name the TPLF appropriated to win a “reflected glory” from a resistance by the revolt of Tigryans against the central Government in 1943. The revolt was called Woyanne. Prior to its victory and after May 1991, the TPLF has joined with groups which it selected for alliance. It excluded such organisations as the EPRP, which had a long record of resisting the military regime and went for all those who can loyally work with it. With itself as a core, it formed the EPDRF. The TPLF tried to be a leading member of the EPDRF and tried to manage hiding within the new outfit.

which I have called "Shabbier"⁵ in this article signed a "peace agreement" in Algiers at the urging of OAU, UN, USA, and EU.^{**}

Since Ethiopia^{***} has never been an aggressor in the region and it plays a pivotal role in establishing peace and stability in the region,^{****} I shall take the

⁵ Shabia is the Arabic name for the EPLF to distinguish it from Jebha (which referred to the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF)). The Shabia came out as a splinter group from the ELF and has since become a popularly used name to distinguish whatever the Eritrean leadership has become. Post-independent Eritrea has also seen the self- change of the EPLF into the PFJD (Peoples Front for Democracy and Justice). But the Shabia is the popular name in the press and imagination of Ethiopians as a whole.

*The conflict between TPLF and EPLF appears largely motivated by the need to send a clear message to others specially the western powers (who helped to install the two regimes by active destabilisation of the earlier regime), and establish who is the more significant power player in the region. The latest offensive (May 2000) appears to relay to the Western powers that the TPLF should be taken more seriously than the EPLF. This competition for Western attention and approval by the local competitors for power and resources betrays an inadvertent Western contribution to this conflict by the western failure to select who is the more significant player in the region. It looks a deadly war lasting two years has to be fought to settle this detail. While The TPLF might think it has made the point, it remains to be seen how Western regimes translate its "victories" over the EPLF leaders purchased by the terrible cost of blood, tears, toil, hunger and dislocation of the Ethiopian people. The power of the western regimes over the TPLF cannot be underrated. Who could force "defeat in victory" out of the TPLF with expressions of retaliatory intentions except for the U.S. and Britain? Issays' appreciation of the U.S. role in saving him appears very sincere. He told reporters that the Woyanne leadership had a plan to oust him. All the explanations by the Woyanne of "mission accomplished" hide the true reason for their sudden U-turn! It is trying to put a brave face in the wake of utter capitulation. They did not even try to buy time by allowing non- coincidence between the intention to withdraw and their actual withdrawal. It is as if they beat a hasty retreat under cover of a self- congratulatory "victory."

** Though formally this "peace agreement" has been effected through the OAU framework, the USA, EU, UN and others have worked together to bring the "agreement" in the shape it has assumed in Algiers.

*** The conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia has all the trappings of intractable conflicts such as the one in Northern Ireland: the conflict between Israel and Palestine. It is one of the most intractable conflicts in the world today.(see for a comparative conflict resolution methodology for Northern Ireland, palestine-Israel and South Africa, the research by an international team: B. Gidron and S.Katz on The International Study of Peace/conflict resolution Organisations: Preliminary Findings,ISTR Third International Conference, Geneva, July 9,1998).

implications to it as one key measure of success of the accord. Once again Ethiopia seems to experience a wholly unsatisfactory political outcome from its recent military successes scored by its army and population.

This was what I warned a little over a year ago:

"All along in our long history, what comes clear is that our country has travelled from different levels of punch-ups via military actions to wholly unsatisfactory and badly bandaged political results"(p. 32).

I added, *"Once again Woyanne may go from a punch-up war to a patch-up peace. The patriotic will must insist that it wishes a deadly war which consumed our youth to end at the very minimum with accountable and just peace"(ibid).*

Three daggers seemed to have been thrown at the heart of Ethiopia after the signing of the OAU-UN-USA-EU brokered Algiers agreement between the foreign ministers of Ethiopia and Eritrea.

- The first is the stationing of foreign troops under the euphemism of the UN peacekeeping force 25km inside the current Eritrean State.
- The second is the ambiguous statement regarding the principles that provide the framework for border demarcation: i.e., realities after Ethiopia's partition and the utilisation of Italian colonial maps.⁶
- The third is the implicit complicity of the Woyanne regime to accept the Eritrean State as it is without any concession to Ethiopia's legitimate need to

**** To maintain Ethiopia from disintegration is in the interest of not only Ethiopia itself but the security of the region as a whole. If Ethiopia is to be forced to disintegrate the cost for the region will be incalculable/unimaginable. It is therefore of a vital interest for the region as a whole to keep Ethiopia united and stable as the core of the region called the Horn of Africa. Political projects that aim at the fragmentation of Ethiopia bring hazard to the whole region; and they should be resisted. Ethiopia has a function of stabilising the region in the face of collapse of neighbouring states such as Somalia, and an unstable leadership in Eritrea. The Woyanne regime is callous, crafty and opportunistic. It seems it can go to any length to maintain power.

⁶ The OAU position on borders has been endorsed in the Algiers Peace agreement with all its ambiguities: "Respect for the borders existing at independence as stated in resolution AHG/Res 16(1) adopted by the OAU Summit in Cairo in 1964 and, in this regard, determine them on the basis of pertinent colonial treaties and applicable international law."

have a maritime outlet.⁷

Maritime Access and Ethiopia's Security

In an admirably written book entitled "Bekedami Haile Selassie Zemen YeEritrea Guday: 1941-1963(E.C)", Zewde Reta produced documentary evidence that in all the debates on how to dispose of former Italian colonies, the one consistent offer to Ethiopia by every country including Italy was the port of Assab. (see Zewde Reta, Berhane Ena Selam Printing Press, 2000). Access to the sea is for Ethiopia perhaps as important as solving Eritrea's permanent need to have enough food stock to feed its population year in and year out irrespective of drought. Peace and stability will endure if the parties are prepared to address honestly their needs and demands on each other and solve it with a rational attitude to their negotiations.

As a central country of the region, maritime access to Ethiopia is not only in the interest of Ethiopia but also of the region of the Horn of Africa as a whole. Any talk of regional stability without recognition for Ethiopia to have maritime outlet is a problem. The proposition of maintaining Eritrea as a garrison military state, with a weak and fragmented Ethiopia amounts to nothing but an experiment to embroil the region into never-ending turmoil and violence. This may be the unwelcome consequence of the hurried action of the mediators or the powers, for omitting the issue of re-negotiating maritime rights. It should be recognised that a land-locked Ethiopia will never serve the interest of this much-tortured region and population from Nakfa to the Indian Ocean on the southern most tip of Somalia.

If the regimes of the region were to be friendly, perhaps arrangements amongst them can be flexible. The reality is that friends can turn out to be enemies; and enemies can be friends. This forces that the strategy for peace must take into consideration the volatility of the regimes and the lack of and shallow roots of democratic norms and culture which can restrain them from resorting to violence against each other. For example, an unfriendly Eritrean regime will always want to make Ethiopia vulnerable. A patriotic Government in Ethiopia, which may come either by election or by force, may not find Ethiopia's irrational and enforced lock-up away from the Red Sea palatable. Whilst such a Government may never wish to use force, it can utilise the advantage of geography and make Assab a ghost place. Unless Ethiopia uses this port, it will remain practically dysfunctional. If the Shabia leaders were not so bloody-

⁷ UN General assembly Resolution 390 A (V) of December 2,1950, acknowledges Ethiopia's maritime interest as "legitimate" when it recommended the federal arrangement: "The rights and claims of Ethiopia based on geographical, historical, ethnic, or economic reasons, including ***in particular Ethiopia's legitimate need for adequate access to the sea***"(emphasis mine!)

mind, they would have offered Assab a long time ago. Their meanness perhaps makes the Tigryan leaders unconvinced when Eritrean leaders wanted to help themselves to the areas in the border areas at Badme.

Flexibility requires change of attitude. Peace and stability require that actors should take the sources of conflict and try to address them. One should not assume Woyanne would rule forever and protect the so-called Eritrean sovereignty, as it is even engaged in fighting with it. The peace treaty should be between Ethiopia and Eritrea; not simply to bring together the seating Governments, fronts and parties of the time. To endure, it requires addressing the roots of instability and conflict, and laying down mechanisms for enlisting the undeceived and un-coerced consent of the governed or mis-governed as the case may be. To ignore once more the Ethiopian population, which manifested a genuine, patriotic reaction against Shabia's aggression is to ask for more future trouble. It will be cheating Ethiopia's genuine desire to recover a maritime presence. It will be to ignore Ethiopia's genuine concern for security and its justifiable anxiety that being land locked has meant that its enemies (e.g. Italy, Egypt and so on) in the past have used maritime control to deny Ethiopia the means to defend itself.

The issue for Ethiopia of maritime access is not simply an instrumental need to expedite trade and commerce. It is linked to its very being, survival and ontological security. It is a timeless quest which generations of Ethiopians have paid in blood to open Ethiopia's legitimate access to the sea. Ethiopia's concern is not therefore something, which can easily be dismissed by the swallowing of Woyanne of some silly "peace" agreement. Whether Woyanne swallowed this deal by its own choice or by the pressure of foreign powers,⁸ it does not inscribe Ethiopia's best interest. It undermines, in fact, humiliates Ethiopia. Why did Woyanne need to ask for foreign troops, given its declared military successes against the Shabia even if these are to be stationed within Eritrean territory? Is it not that tantamount to asking Ethiopia to shoot itself on the foot?

⁸ It appears that the US Government put a heavy pressure on the TPLF leadership to withdraw unconditionally from its seemingly successful counter-offensive in May 2000. This can be gleaned from two sources: a) the profuse praise by Issayas Afeworki for US diplomatic action/ intervention to save his neck, and b) the public complaint by supporters of Woyanne regime against US threats to impose embargo on the regime. It appears the threat to ban officials from travelling out of Ethiopia by the US seemed to have the desired trick in contributing to an abrupt end of the TPLF offensive. The US government seemed to know what can make the elite vulnerable and used the stick to reverse what looked a "victory" for the TPLF objective to overthrow the Shabia regime. One thing the post-colonial elite would find difficult to accept is a restriction on its vast opportunities to travel. There is a political economy of this opportunity enjoyed by the elite. The US threat at whittling the perks of the elite may have contributed to Woyanne's retreat.

Since the public eruption of its conflict with its former strategic ally, Woyanne has claimed that it wants only Eritrean withdrawal from occupied territories. Time and time again, it has expressed no intention to violate Eritrean sovereignty in the effort to remove Shabia's aggression. All the same, Woyanne cannot deny that it has entered Eritrean territory even if it were to serve the goal of re-claiming occupied land. It mounted a successful defensive counter-offensive, which resulted in the Ethiopian army occupying Barentu in Western Eritrea. That means, as soon as Woyanne entered Eritrean territory beyond the zone of occupation, it has to accept that it can do this only by violating Eritrean sovereignty. Subject to the protocols of the final settlement, Woyanne wishes to remain within Eritrean territory. But it cannot continue to stay in and not also violate the latter's sovereignty. Fear of violation of Eritrean sovereignty cannot be the reason for Woyanne's refusal to occupy and bargain over Assab. It cannot also be for lack of military capacity. One wonders what brought about this Woyanne refrain? It cannot be respect for Eritrean sovereignty. It is possible this refrain may be predicated on some expectation to re-negotiate the status of Assab as part of an overall peaceful settlement. What ever may be the reason, Woyanne's coyness here is baffling. If Assab is not part of the agenda, there is hardly a reason for the war that can be of interest to Ethiopian patriotic opinion.

Woyanne has begun to talk of Ethiopian sovereignty since the war broke out in May 1998. Before that it spoke in terms that undermined Ethiopian patriotic nationalism. Whether this is real conversion or a self-serving rhetoric to win Ethiopian patriotic support remains to be seen. There must be some objective measure to indicate the conversion of Woyanne to the Ethiopian idea as-opposed to a mere expression of Tigryan partisanship.

The fact the peace agreement Woyanne signed has nothing to placate Ethiopian patriotic sacrifice beyond the withdrawal of Eritrean troops from the border in Tigray increases the doubt over the Woyanne purpose and intention regarding the purpose of this war.

It seemed Woyanne have lost the chance to make good its rhetoric of coming to terms or reconciling with Ethiopia's long history (i.e. Ethiopia is now 5,000 years old-claimed Meles in one of his recent interviews!). The fact of demonstrating genuine Ethiopian identity is integrally connected with the actual re-building of Ethiopia's interest, national and civic purpose including the carrying out of the demand of Ethiopians to acquire their legitimate maritime rights. It means to appreciate and act in the best interest of Ethiopia by safeguarding its long-term security. Ethiopia's access to maritime presence in the world is a litmus paper whether Woyanne has crossed over to Ethiopia or remains entrenched in its unsullied Tigryan chauvinistic ethnicism. It appears to be shunning Ethiopia's strategic interest for maritime security, Woyanne lost the

opportunity to legitimise any” Ethiopian credential” they so nosily claimed they have acquired by saturating the airwaves with their prosaic Ehiopianist rhetoric.

Sooner or later - with or without Woyanne - Ethiopia will win its rightful place with a credible maritime presence. And the world can either be made to understand and/or will fully understand any action taken by any Ethiopian Government to re-claim Assab! Woyanne is the bigger loser for coming out in stark colours showing that its imagination remains always limited by its initial formation of standing for Tigray as an ethnic-linguistic grouping.

By signing the Algiers “peace”, Woyanne seems to concede that it is okay for over a reportedly 100,000 youth to go to their early graves and a reported million to be displaced for the sole purpose of getting Shabia out of a few kilometres inside the Tigryan regional state! Is this action taken merely to make good the Tigrayan State’s demand of getting a piece of land in Badme and the other areas? This equation between so many lives lost and the paltry gains of adjacent land to Tigray does not make sense specially since Woyanne could have pursued other courses to recover this land. Even if Tigray is an Ethiopian state and Ethiopians should protect their country, it makes it extremely difficult to justify this level of carnage for barren land. What is dearer? Human life or dirt land? Why should Eritrean and Ethiopian youth die so needlessly? Human security has to be sacrificed for protecting the sub-national state security of Tigryans. It raises profound issues of when does the sovereignty of the region, state, nation make sense. Can it make sense if the sovereignty of Tigray is sought without the sovereignty of the larger Ethiopian entity and above all the sovereignty of the Ethiopian citizen? This issue/ question rings like a bell in the conscience of Ethiopia, Africa and the world. There must be good explanations for it; say all people who cherish human life! And to date, there is no satisfactory explanation why this war took place in the first place. And still more why it dragged on for so long?

The Fudge in Boundary Demarcation

The relationship between Eritrea and Ethiopia does not fit the straight colonial relationship of former colonies and the powers like Britain, France, Portugal, Germany and Italy. Eritrea got its independence from Ethiopia and never from Italy. The fact that Eritrea got its independence from a country that has been under the colonial pressure itself and, in fact a frequent victim, makes the principle of adopting the Cairo 1964 OAU resolution AHG\Res 16(1) suspect. As it is not disputable, Eritrea did not get its independence from Italy. This rules out the admission of Italian cartography for the demarcation of boundaries between Eritrea and Ethiopia. Eritrea got its independence from Ethiopia. She cannot be equated as a colonial power as Italy. This makes the utilisation of the 1964 OAU principle irrelevant for the current peace agreement. In reality, that

principle should have been adjusted. Instead the negotiators simply took it as if it were relevant in a straightforward sense. There is thus an unavoidable fudge regarding the very principle for the demarcation of boundaries between Eritrea and Ethiopia. It will help all concerned if they admit that the issue is a novel problem requiring an imaginative solution.

Taking the 1964 OAU principle has the following type problems:

- ◆ It is not clear whether it is colonial maps of pre-1991 Ethiopia or the situation of Ethiopia's bifurcation into two states, which establishes the priority for border demarcation between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Both cannot be employed at once. They point to different boundary lines. If Ethiopia in the pre-1991-'93 is taken to establish the criterion of demarcation, one would have to deal with problems of choice and selection of the many maps drawn by Italy and successive Ethiopian governments. If Ethiopia after 1991-'93 is taken; Eritrea's administration did not include the Badme areas. Otherwise the Shabia would not have resorted to force to remove the Tigryan state administration from the area.
- ◆ The status of colonial maps is also very slippery. Besides the issue of settling which one of the many maps to take into consideration, there is the undeniable fact Italian maps are unreliable and often self-serving. They often included both the realities of Italian controlled territories as well as areas Italy intended to control. How can Italian maps be taken seriously given Italy's generous help to its claims?
- ◆ Italy always intended to take over Ethiopia. The Eritrean enclave was conceived by them as a springboard for a wider colonial ambition on Ethiopia. Italy always intended to take over Ethiopia. The maps, the unequal treaties and the border demarcations reflected a temporary equilibrium of forces and cannot be taken to reflect the settled intention of either Ethiopia or Italy. That means, they cannot serve as legitimising instruments to demarcate borders or settle disputes in international law.
- ◆ There is also the larger difficulty of any Ethiopian Government stooping low to accept unequal and unfair maps drawn by Italian colonialists. How can an Ethiopian regime accept the Italian colonial maps? Which of the maps can be seen to be acceptable amongst the many that have been drawn in the constant change of hands between the encroaching colonial power and the resisting Ethiopian government? The selection of maps is daunting, as there is no such thing as a "legitimate" colonial map, except as an oxymoron! The more vexing question is the following: How can colonial partition be used to determine the fate of an old nation which successive generations fought strenuously to disoblige to it? Any self-respecting Ethiopian Government cannot and should not use or be seen to use colonial maps.

- ◆ The recognition of Eritrea as an Ethiopian “colony” has contributed to its new status of national independence by the Woyanne. Another way of looking at it is this: The last “colonial” power is Ethiopia over Eritrea. This has been peddled with facile ease by leading Woyanne and Shabia ideologists including Meles and Afeworki. In that case the relevant map is the one drawn by the last “colonial” government. And whether one likes it or not that happened to be the Derg. How come Ethiopia’s maps under the Derg are excluded from contributing to the final settlement of boundaries? In fact, the Derg’s map is infinitely more sensible than any map drawn by Italy, since it recognises the Afar’s right to self-determination and provides the possibility for them to escape possible oppression from Tigrayans on both sides of River Mereb. If any demarcation is to be made and a map has to be selected to assist this process, the only valid one is that drawn by the Derg following from the recommendation of its now defunct institute of nationalities. Any other map will neither bring stability nor make any sense to use as a reference let alone as a solution. No Government that respects itself as Ethiopian can accept Italian maps or can be seen to accept it. The only one an Ethiopian Government should use as a reference is the one drawn by the Derg. It has the merit of including demographic patterns, vernacular identities, ecological resources, ethnic varieties and patterns.
- ◆ Unless the demarcation of boundaries takes Ethiopia’s interest and limits itself merely to considerations of the hegemonic aspirations of the now quarrelling Tigrayns on both sides of the River Mereb, it will be another source of instability rather than serving as a springboard for a solution.

Perils from stationing foreign troops

The stationing of UN troops is even more humiliating and damaging to Ethiopia’s long-term interest. By accepting the stationing of foreign troops without any agreement on Assab, Ethiopia opens itself to the sanctions of the foreign powers to take action against it. The Algiers peace plan defines a “security zone” which excludes Assab. If Ethiopia wishes to claim Assab in the future, its hands will be tied. The agreement stipulates that the great powers can use the UN charter to impose sanction and military action against Ethiopia. It will be a great folly to tie Ethiopia’s hands and sign away the rights of future Governments. That is to say, such action would make Ethiopia an aggressor should a Government comes which wishes to make good the Ethiopian population’s demand for maritime access.

Regardless of how long the peace keeping force of the UN under OAU auspices police the so called “temporary security zone”, they will no doubt provide a shield from which the Eritrean garrison state can re- build itself. Eritrea will re-assemble its army which retreated from every direction during the May offensive by Ethiopia and re-fuel its ambition to be a regional player. There will

be no doubt Eritrea will find covert and overt support from Ethiopia's regional and international detractors.

Woyanne seemed to have seen only the point of humiliating Issayas by stationing foreign troops exclusively within Eritrea. But all along Issayas does not mind having such foreign troops, for it amplifies the noise he wishes to magnify. And that is to legitimise internationally he is running an independent state! What Woyanne thinks is humiliating to Issayas in fact provides succour to him.

This action also reveals the very personalised nature of the conflict. Action motivated to assist Issaya's downfall only is short-termist and as such self-defeating. Action for peace and stability must consider the broader canvass of conflict-sources and tackling these at the root. Only actions that incorporate the security and strategic demands of Ethiopia and the region are relevant. The Woyanne calculation is perhaps that Issayas might feel humiliated by stationing troops not in the disputed areas as demanded by the Shabia leaders first but on their backyard. Woyanne might have calculated further that this humiliation might encourage Eritreans to dent his cult-like presence in Eritrea; and it may even accelerate organised resistance against him. All these may be wishful thinking; as there does not seem to be any credible force of any consequence in Eritrea to unseat Issayas with the covert and overt assistance of Woyanne. Foreign troops, far from undermining Issayas, can serve to make him stay by protecting him from any reprisal by his colleagues or from Ethiopia should he misbehaves. The job of these foreign troops is first and foremost to gather intelligence and to report. In recent times we have seen their role changing on the ground embroiling themselves in combat roles in places such as Sierra Leone.

The real issue in the region is to decrease arms and armies, and not to increase them and certainly not to complicate them by introducing a multilateral force under UN/OAU sponsorship or otherwise. Eritrea has been arming itself since its birth as a new state. The stationing of foreign troops, far from forcing it to demilitarise, helps it to re-arm. Woyanne propaganda claims to have dented the Eritrean army's as a fighting machine. The Eritrean leaders say they made a strategic retreat. They never accepted they were not and could not match Ethiopian onslaught. This shows their deep disrespect to Ethiopia, which has been nurtured over a generation of war against Ethiopia's existence.

Two conditions are necessary for the region to move from the arms race or army building race to the much needed development race. If UN/OAU troops have to be involved in the region, the mandate has to be to see Eritrea reduce its army to a militia and internal security force. There must be recognition of the fact that

Ethiopia had one of the lowest budgets for defence until the outbreak of this war. After the war it has been forced to build a defence force. The main reason for such a negative turn is the 1998 war with Eritrea. The only compensation for this evil turn is if Eritrea is compelled to reduce its army to a police force. It does not need an army since all its army seems to do is fight all the neighbours of Eritrea.

If the UN/OAU force will not undertake a task to see Eritrea reduce first its army to a police force, it should not be allowed to step in the region. What is the point of risking such a machine with all the potential negative consequences that may come from its presence in the region?

If intervention of others is necessary, it must be limited to the OAU and the significant countries in Africa such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Ghana. It should be an African affair. Even the reasons for the intervention of these African countries must be clearly spelt out.

Local elders from both sides of the Mereb, backed by a willingness to allow them to come up with suggestions for arbitration can do a better job than any external force. Their knowledge and wisdom has more value than the information from suspect colonial maps and great power mediators. All it takes to make them function is for the conflicting parties to observe voluntary truce with the help of the OAU and other countries South of the Sahara with no direct interest in the dispute except to end it.

The Ethiopian nation should be wishing desperately to return from the arms race to the development race. As long as Eritrea as a military garrison state continues, it is hard how Ethiopia can focus attention and thought on development. That is why Eritrea is made to reduce its army and to stop recruiting young people to a national armed service instead of sending them to school. The stationing of troops in Eritrea may assist Eritrea to re-arm sheltered under the cover of the foreign presence. Such a mediating force can easily turn blind and allow Eritrea to re-build its army. Paradoxically the agency of mediation may end up serving as the unwitting instrument that breezes life to the concept of the Eritrean garrison military state that prepares Eritrea for a credible regional power role.

There is also the larger difficulty that wherever these foreign troops have been stationed, instability and chaos always remain a permanent feature. It is messy when foreign troops specially UN sponsored troops enter. It remains messy when they exit. One would never wish ones country- Eritrea or Ethiopia and the region to attract such a predicament. Little thought seems to have gone into the free admission of foreign troops. If Woyanne is reputed to be the victor, why did

it readily accept such a humiliating result? The fact that the foreign troops are stationed in Eritrea does not make their introduction benign to Ethiopia. It affects Ethiopia and there is no reason why Woyanne has to accept this given the balance of military forces. Why is it necessary to station foreign troops when Ethiopia has demonstrated capability to hold its ground? Many questions spring to mind.

Human Consequence ignored in the Algiers peace plan

The 15-point peace plan from Algiers has nothing to say on the humanitarian consequences, the lost time for development and the squandering of intellectual and moral energy this border conflict unleashed on the population of the region. The humanitarian tragedy from this war has always been unacceptable. The "peace agreement" accentuates the fact that the humanitarian loss is about the only significant consequence, which matters from this violent episode. Both Woyanne and Shabia seem ranged to rehabilitate themselves with a roguish peace. But the population of the region may yet see more turmoil and violence from such a "peace". The gross humanitarian catastrophe and the over 100,000 dead cry for justice; and people the world over wonder why was all these killing allowed to take place so casually and carelessly? The human consequence cannot be ignored specially since the declared objectives of the two regimes and the peace agreement they agreed to sign does not serve the interest of either Eritrea or Ethiopia. Had there been a clear objective for the war, which affects the real interest of people of the region, then there would have been an effort to understand human losses. In the absence of such reasons, the human loss becomes doubly unacceptable and intolerable. Even if the objective of the war were clear, human losses have to be retained at a minimal level. During the last two years, the region was sucked into the arms trade and huge numbers of lives were lost. This is something that demands clear explanation and compensation. A peace "agreement" without provisions and responsibilities for the human consequences would not be acceptable.

The difficulties of drawing a balance-sheet

What is the hard gain after so much loss? There is some peculiar feature to this war related to some pre-modern and pre-rational attitudes prevailing within the elite. This is an admixture of western ideas with pre-modern higher superstitions. The leaderships of Eritrea and the Tigryan core leaders of Ethiopia share this affliction. It manifests in the form of a virulent and irreverent chauvinism. Sometimes this is expressed ironically to oppose what the leaders think is "chauvinism" from others, often referring to those whose ideas they do not share. The region appears to be filled with rampant form of chauvinism, just as a magnetic field is filled with electromagnetic waves. To be sure, stereotyping like gossip is something that exists in every society. The Dutch joke about the Belgians. The English often poke fun at the Scots, Irish and Welsh, and all do it

against the English somewhat routinely. The Danish joke about Swedes and Germans. Every people do this in a harmless sometimes in a funny way. They convert unacceptable prejudice into a benign entertainment. When used properly it may even have a positive value. African-Americans used the insults of 500 years into an innocuous play amongst themselves. When we were children in Ethiopia, we used to be free with stereotyping jokes with absolutely no intention to harming others.

But in the Horn of Africa today, everything seems to have gone sour. In particular any expression of prejudice manifests in the form of chauvinism. Such prejudice deeply influences all aspects of life from the personal to the public. Everyone seems chauvinistic towards one another. The prejudice is often expressed in a brutish, mean, ugly and harsh tones. Sometimes, it takes even violent and military actions, very often against the best and considered interests of the relevant actors. Somalia is in ruins because clan splits from clan owing partly to strange attitudes and beliefs held about one another. Chauvinist attitude about one another cannot be ruled out as a motive for the break out of hostilities between Shabia and Woyanne. If one reads between the lines, their propaganda against each other suggests an unwarranted display of prejudice and arrogance towards each other. Add westernist pretensions to traditionalist arrogance, you have a condition which defies any attempt to be amenable to reason and common sense. Ignorance breeds more ignorance. Arrogance breeds more arrogance. The consequence from such a disposition is the type of mayhem we saw over the last two years.

There is no doubt that this chauvinistic attitude has much to do in contributing to precipitating pre-existing grievances or disagreements into war. This is not to deny or underestimate that the regimes do not have issues. They have issues. But such issues can be solved with the application of rational frames of mind. The fuel that disabuses rationality is the ignorance and arrogance which lie buried in the minds of the actors. Chauvinism blinds them to reason, making them exaggerate so that issues cannot be handled within a non-violent frame. The fuel of chauvinism and superstitious beliefs about one another serves as catalysts of war. Chauvinism destroys trust. The loss of trust destroys social capital - a danger, which open actors to splits and quarrels. There is a great need to anchor attitudes on communicative, rationalist and enlightened belief systems through education and anti-ignorant removing methods. A peace process has to take this issue of chauvinism seriously in its calculus.

Related to the chauvinism is the traditionalist attitude to land. The latter is such a prized possession that people will go to any length to altercate for a piece of land. Part of the reason why there was such a harsh reaction to each other is a

function of the way they perceive land within conceptions akin to a feudalistic attachment.

The third factor is the modernist logic of primitive accumulation that both leaderships on both sides of River Mereb were stimulating by their economic and political policies. It provided an attitude of either to compete or perish to them. They both wanted to industrialise at the same time. That turned into a problem over time.

The fourth factor is the warped understanding; in fact inhuman understanding of sovereignty linked to ethnic prejudice of the current core leadership issued from Tigray. For sovereignty to have a secure foundation, it must embrace human security and the sovereignty of the Ethiopian citizen. The resort to violence or response to violent provocations should be restrained by the principle of upholding the sovereignty of ordinary Ethiopian citizens. Leaders in Woyanne understand the citizen as a degraded human being parcelled within the "killel" slots assigned by them. There is a caste system amongst the "killiles." If the threat is directed at Tigryans and Tigray, the leaders are more likely to react with violence and hostility than if the same threat were to be directed at other "killiles," where the main base of the ruling elite are thinner. The U-turn was justified by making gains for the Tigray state as the gain of all. While "this gain as gain for Ethiopia as a whole" can be disputed, in the absence of a settled peace settlement, it betrays the ethnicist limitation of Woyanne's interpretation of Ethiopia's interest. Ethiopia's interest is to open a corridor to the sea. It needs to exert a measure of control over any real or potential security threats to its survival that comes from its forced, unjust and unfair exclusion in the affairs of the Red Sea shores and beyond. It cannot afford to let the gate to the sea under the control of hostile neighbours or external powers.

For Woyanne, it is not larger issues of security and survival of the country related to securing a reliable maritime access that seemed to have been on the agenda. It is de-sensitising the Tigrayan population that was irate by the provocations of the Shabia. Once the latter was secured, the former- Ethiopia's long term security needs- was conveniently sacrificed.

Fifthly: I have explored the psychological reasons for the war related to the disposition to violence by both leaderships. They both are prisoners of a violent history. They have been inured to it and they only know how to deal with violently against an environment they fail to comprehend. They do not know how to respond to it with negotiation, conversation and dialogue.

When viewed with these factors in mind, it seems the Tigryan leaders on both sides of River Mereb degraded the sovereignty of the human being, each for its

own reasons, as they ended sapping their energy for alliance. And chauvinistic attitude towards one another provided the fuel under conditions of different claims on each other and grievances for the harsh turn to their cosy relationship.

This is broadly how the making and breaking of alliances circulated. It seems in 1991-1997 Tigrayan chauvinists south of River Mereb allied with Tigryan chauvinists north of the river Mereb to subdue Ethiopian patriotic nationalism. And in 1998 the Tigrayan chauvinists south of River Mereb switched their alliance and sided with Ethiopian patriotic nationalism to beat back the more northern Tigrayan chauvinists of Eritrea. This war seemed to be the penultimate war amongst Tigrayans who are chauvinists towards each other. It is a war for primary accumulation. One can only make sense of the importance of Badme if it is understood as part of the plunder and robbery which all primary accumulation drives have occasioned. Under the logic of primitive accumulation, having any barren land acquires super-normal significance. No wonder, the border issue became such a malignant cancer, providing the pretext or the reason for hundreds of thousands of people to die. Tragically attention from millions of starving people have to be deflected to settle scores between forces seized with the mania of accumulating land in the form of capital for the sake of competition between Tigryans in Eritrea and Tigryans in Tigray for the domination of the resources of the wider region of the Horn of Africa.

As usual, the Ethiopian people fought for country and honour. Unfortunately they allied with the Melesses - the trickiest customers around when it comes to abusing Ethiopia. The Woyanne continue to squander the nation's will, mental, psycho-political, social and human energy. They persist in their un-holly task of undermining Ethiopia's national identity and purpose. Far from rehabilitating themselves as Ethiopian with the help of this war, they seem to have abused the nation's good will and cheated the just emotion of the people. The Woyanne seem to have come full circle:

- (a) first allied with the Shabia;*
- (b) switched their alliance from them;*
- (c) found it expedient to win Ethiopian patriotic support by employing rhetorical concession to Ethiopian history and age;*
- (d) entered a wholly detrimental peace "agreement" with Shabia- thus sending a signal that they are preparing possible attack against Ethiopian patriotic nationalism once more. The risk of Woyanne turning against Ethiopian patriotism remains real.*

It is the Woyanne that have been the ones, which have oscillated like a pendulum between Eritrean nationalism and Ethiopian patriotic nationalism in their vain attempt to save and bolster Tigrayan chauvinistic nationalism. Their

consistent behaviour is the fact they wish to uphold Tigryan interest come what may. And this can be gleaned from their opportunism both towards both Eritrea and Ethiopia. In fact, they remain deeply and offensively opportunistic to Ethiopia. And this uncongenial side to them must continue to be exposed until they prove to us that they have been converted seriously into Ethiopian patriots - not in words but also in deeds as well! The onus or burden of proof is on them. The Ethiopian people have shown their willingness to cooperate with Woyanne in the effort to remove what has been Shabia's aggression. It is Woyanne, which continues to abuse the Ethiopian civic-national territorial imagination.

Truce first to prepare the conditions of a just peace

Whether Eritrea and Ethiopia govern themselves in the form of two independent states or forge some sort of close relationship, they are compelled by history and circumstance to have a special relationship with each other. This was recognised by the EPLF in its statement on its relationship with Ethiopia's Democratic Movements in 1985 (see Adulis, vol.11, no.1).⁹ Eritrea is a structurally food deficit place and much of the food that the people eat grows in Ethiopia (until they learned to develop different eating habits from the Ethiopians). Eritrea is condemned to depend on food aid permanently. Eritrean leaders would rather talk about famine in Ethiopia than address the fact that with or without famine, Eritrea needs structurally food aid.¹⁰ They still need to learn to be honest and forthright about this fact in order to solve the problem of the people rather than making grand mental trips to a sort of fantasyland by dreaming about a putative regional power role for Eritrea. They Eritrean leaders have been bragging openly about their military invincibility and some supposed special quality, which they

⁹ Some of the statements in Adulis were written as follows: "The demand for the secession of Ethiopian nationalities has neither an historical nor an economic basis. (p.4). In the special case of the question of nationalities in Ethiopia, historical, economic and other factors show that unity based on equality is the only correct solution." (p.5). Adulis says further the following regarding the relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea: "The destiny of the Eritrean and Ethiopian peoples is closely linked. The front believes that for the advance of the Eritrean Revolution, co-operation with the struggle of the Ethiopian peoples comes second only to the capability of the Eritrean people and that, for the Ethiopian Revolution, the most important external factor is the Eritrean peoples struggles. The EPLF puts the importance of the formation of a solid alliance between the two revolutions above any of its diplomatic activities." (see, Ethiopia Profile for a critical commentary by myself using a nom de guerre, Abebe Berhe, Vol.4, no.18 & 19, October 1985, Pp.29-329)

¹⁰ According to statistics from the relevant UN agencies, some 70 % of the population of Eritrea depend on food aid for all or part of its food supply. Aid received from the USA represents 30 % of GNP. In 1993 four-fifths of the population relied on food aid. In 1995 over 290,000 tonnes of cereals had to be imported. Approximately 3.5 % of the total land are cultivated in contrast to 66 % in Ethiopia. In Eritrea, overall rate of adult illiteracy is 80.5 %. Amongst the demobilised women fighters, the rate is believed to be as high as 95 %. Two-thirds of Eritreans depend on agriculture and pastoralism for a living.

claimed for themselves to make them come out in the shortest time possible as the "Singapore" or "Europe" of Africa. Other foreign circles have bought this self-serving rhetoric and flattered them to nurse ambition as the region's military power. That has inadvertently contributed to the inflation of their arrogance that led them to strike first the Tigryan state inviting the deadly response of the last two years from the Woyanne regime. It appears such a dream has been frustrated from all Eritrea's neighbours. The last neighbour to do that is the Ethiopian nation. For Ethiopian patriotic opinion, rebuffing the war started by the EPLF is part of an expression of rejection of the emergence of Eritrea as a military garrison state. The latter has become a policy by the leaders of Eritrea and probably with the tacit and informal or explicit and formal endorsement of such local ambition by some of the Great Powers and some of the countries in the region. The Woyanne regime appears to have its own ambition in fighting the Eritrean leadership related to power maintenance and seeking and earning broader credential to be seen Ethiopian and merely Tigryan.

Eritrea cannot afford to exist with permanent hostile neighbours most of which are larger than it is. Though Ethiopia can live without Assab, it needs maritime presence. It is using Djibouti now. For Eritrea and Ethiopia to be back on a peace track, their respective needs should be recognised and faced with honesty. The geographical and cultural special relationship ought to be re-confirmed with a political-moral special relationship. Without this larger consideration, a peace agreement will not stick. It will hold only when a process starting from a truce prepares the conditions of a peace that re-establishes the special relationship between Eritrea and Ethiopia, on the basis of respect of Ethiopian civic-national patriotic evolution, development and future.

Can the Woyanne and Shabia re-establish this special relationship? The answer is no! Both, for different reasons, oppose the composite Ethiopian national idea and purpose. Woyanne holds to ethnic sub-nationalism. Shabia wants the destruction of Ethiopia by using divisive ethnic sub-nationalism. In both the period of war and period of peace, the one constant for Ethiopians, which they have to recognise in solving problems and challenges to the nation, is for Ethiopia to recover its spirit and soul as a civic-national reality. This is the hard gain for a population, which fought with so much patriotic stamina against aggression, and for national honour. Woyanne appears to have had narrow sub-national calculations. The Ethiopian patriotic population had Ethiopia's honour in the forefront. There is a struggle to make the peace reflect the Ethiopian viewpoint.

There must be also some hard gains for the population that sacrificed its youth for this terrible war. The hard gain for Ethiopia is to insist the principle for establishing a special relationship with Eritrea be on the basis of the recognition

of the build up of Ethiopian civic national and territorial identity in all the constitutions, institutions and social practices of Ethiopia. Until the peace agreement facilitates such an outcome, Ethiopians should not be seduced by any rhetoric to make them buy such an agreement.

It is for this reason that, I think, a truce might be the appropriate response to match the current military and political realities between Eritrea and Ethiopia. It is important that Ethiopia's interest is not sacrificed by rushing an ill-digested agreement. A truce sends the message of stopping hostilities while suggesting a willingness to work for a peace agreement in the future. It provides respite and serenity so that the various stakeholders reserve a healing time to recognise their best interests and take action that will assist the realisation of their true interests rather than interests they pursue boiling in a state of anger and revulsion towards each other.

The perspective of a durable and lasting peace and stability in the region between Eritrea and Ethiopia is not lost if the process begins with a truce and nothing else. North and South Korea still do not have a peace agreement! A truce will provide the opportunity for tempers to cool. It will make the population to have the opportunities to reflect on the best modalities and arrangements suitable for carrying out co-operative existence. Whether Eritrea and Ethiopia remain either as neighbours or communities whose destiny is tied by so many links of geographical contiguity/ proximity and history, they cannot fail to appreciate the rights and obligations to each other.

Also the level of human catastrophe is not something that can be explained away: for the putative gains for Ethiopia balanced against the human losses incurred stand as an indictment of the regimes which started this carnage.

At the moment, the level of contradiction between Woyanne and Shabia is so big, it is not possible to see how they can work together even with a "peace agreement." The external powers hope that a "peace agreement" will make them friends again. And they seem to ignore the human tragedy wrought by this war. This position is too instrumental. It is not only morally unacceptable but also politically it will not work. Unless the belligerents learn that it is not acceptable to embroil their youth into harm's way, they will be impelled to do this again and again. For this larger reason of curbing future turmoil, the human factor must be central to any peace agreement. Sovereignty is above everything else the sovereignty of the citizen and the human being.

Both have a lot to answer regarding the colossal loss of life, population displacement, forced migration, waging war when millions of citizens are

gripped with famine;¹¹ and squandering of material, human and intellectual resources, time and energy on arms and killing. This at a time when the wellbeing of the people on each side of the River Mereb has been daily subtracted into ill being by drought, poverty and violence. The turning of the region into a cold war type zone, where the race for arms dumping increased dramatically is tantamount to committing crime against humanity by the originators of this conflict.

Until the issues are clarified, the only acceptable course is a truce between Eritrea and Ethiopia to secure their mutual refrain from military action. Peace is not an act. It is a process. Truce, cease-fire and other peace-building measures should be made before forcing an ill advised "peace agreement in a hurry" which can only end up re-haunting once more the region with the spectre of more violence and turmoil.

Given what the region has been through during the last two years, the first logical step is to agree a truce between Ethiopia and Eritrea until the populations on both sides are also free to decide how they wish to arrange their relationship on a medium-term and long-term basis. Violence must be stopped to create a situation where the undeceived and unforced voice of the people can manifest and provide the moral and political categorical imperative for socio-economic transformation of the region as a whole. Neither colonial boundaries, nor force, and the stationing of foreign troops will help to bring about an enduring settlement.

The region needs little or no arms and armies. A garrison military Eritrean state is not acceptable to the region. Eritrea faces little or no security threat unless it invites it itself by constantly provoking its neighbours. It should try to show its new status not by war but with peace and development. It should desist from entertaining ambitions as a regional power, and adjust its security needs accordingly. In the event it adjusts its own perception of itself not to dream to become a regional power on the back of exploiting its special relationship with Ethiopia or any other neighbour for that matter, Eritrea should be satisfied with a reasonably inexpensive security force largely for internal purposes. That would be the rational thing to do. I recognise such a suggestion will be taken as a bitter pill to the current leaders of Eritrea. But I say a development seeking Eritrea

¹¹ The leader of Woyanne-Meles- congratulated himself for achieving a) Eritrean withdrawal from Tigryan territory, b) winning the election and c) coping with the threat of starvation of nearly 8 million people. Woyanne leaders appear also to have timed their counter- offensive to derive benefit for election and deflecting attention from the famine. Some of their propaganda suggests that their "victory" over the Shabia is a big deal. Ethiopia should be expected to win militarily against Eritrea. What is perhaps surprising is that Eritrea held its ground for two years inside Tigryan territory.

would need no more than a police force or militia to maintain internal law and order and maintain any other security needs it may have. It does not need to build an expensive army. It cannot afford it, and it does not need it. The model for Eritrea should be Costa Rica, which has had no army despite the instability of Central America surrounding it. Eritrea cannot afford to hold the ambition of being a regional power based on building armed forces. Focus on development requires that Eritrea stops nursing exaggerated ambitions out of proportion to its size and resources. It is important that a peace agreement requires at the very minimum - the reduction of its army, and certainly stopping the induction of Eritrean youth into compulsory armed training.

The greatest art is to win victory without a battle

Ethiopians and Eritreans must learn to earn victory without a battle. They should draw correct lessons from this two-year episode. They should continue to resist the Tigrayan chauvinist menace hailing from both sides of River Mereb, which is exposing the region to perpetual instability. The wise words of Sun Tzu must guide the Ethiopian temper to deal with these tricky characters:

And I paraphrase:"

"To win ten thousand victories in 10,000 battles is not the highest achievement or art. To win victory without a battle is of the utmost achievement or art."

The Ethiopian nation has the will to survive. It has been threatened many times, but it has overcome. It will and must add the will to renaissance! The nation should engage in a many sided struggle to remove the chauvinists who sent its children so easily and so casually to the grave. Let there be an all-Ethiopian non-violent movement to unseat these hardened and callous Tigrayan tyrants ruling the political and economic real estates on both sides of River Mereb. The Ethiopian people can win victories without battles in their infinite wisdom, which have sustained them against all odds to this day. Let them give full play to their wisdom and begin a process of resistance, which can remove their detractors.

The one positive thing from this war is that both Woyanne and Shabia have been defeated in underestimating Ethiopian patriotic nationalism. Their ascendancy against the Derg provided them the opportunity to pounce against Ethiopian nationalism. Woyanne knows now that it is Ethiopian nationalism that saved it from being ruined by Shabia. Conversely Shabia can only continue to play up divisive ethnicism at the peril of incurring Ethiopia's wrath against it. It should learn that the only way Eritrea can live peacefully with Ethiopia is when its leaders understand not to undermine Ethiopian nationalism. Eritrean leaders must learn that taking on the Ethiopian patriotic nationalism and the Ethiopian

army will only humiliate them. The trumpeted arrogant display of Eritrean military invincibility has been proven to be all but a broken reed by the recent military struggles. They must learn to come to terms with the fact of the existence and resiliency of Ethiopian patriotic nationalism.

If they refuse to live as a small neighbour with their larger neighbours, they will continue to incur further humiliation. The gain by Ethiopia in exposing their purported military prowess might be lost by fudges being introduced in the form of an ill-conceived compromise as a "peace agreement." Though Shabia may have suffered reverses or even defeated, the Eritrean leadership has not accepted this. Psychologically they feel invincible. They are not yet prepared to learn a lesson.

There is a need to know the originator of this lethal blunder. Whether the perpetrators are punished or not (and however difficult it is to distil the truth), efforts must be made to get at the bottom of how this war came to be. Ethiopians must demand accountability. A peace agreement which fudges the issue of who started this war is likely to be a cover up for the perpetrator. There should be resistance and defiance against the war-makers to pass as "peace-makers" on the basis of the concocted plan in Algiers. The long-term interest of the people cannot be served by this shoddy peace agreement. The peace agreement must not be an instrument for rehabilitating Shabia and Woyanne leaders.

The Need for the Revival of the Opposition

The war of the last two years did confuse opposition groups. Most of the groups responded to the war in a variety and rather discordant ways. This helped Woyanne to try to smash the opposition. The absence of a shared principle to benchmark Woyanne misdeeds and misbehaviour is perhaps the main reason for the opposition to act wildly. As the attack by Eritrea was sold to the population as an aggression, the Ethiopian population was united in condemning it. Woyanne made rhetorical concessions to Ethiopian patriotic opinion since it was relatively weaker at the outset of the war compared to Shabia. The war freed the opportunities for the fullest possible expression of Ethiopian patriotic feeling. The opposition related to this patriotic expression somewhat with ambivalence. That is where the opposition lost to respond coherently and intelligently to Woyanne manipulation. The key to hold the opposition together was to go together with Ethiopian patriotic opinion, and the struggle to make the composite Ethiopian idea to shape every aspect of Ethiopian private and public life both during the period of the war and in the post-war period.

Thus during the war, the opposition fractured badly when it should have tried to respond with a united voice. The overwhelming matter is that much of the opposition has been confused over the last two years. It has been split and

weakened. There were those who did not come out strongly against Shabia's aggression. Some even went to the extent of visiting the Shabia leaders and broadcasting strange stories about the war underestimating gravely the fact and the tradition that Ethiopian patriotic opinion always strongly opposed any aggression directed against Ethiopia from whatever quarter. Some others made the error of going all the way and meeting the Woyanne leaders spreading the illusion that the Tigryan leaders have changed their narrow ethnicist spot.

There was a sensible position built on solid support against Shabia aggression and purposefully facilitating the articulation of Ethiopia's patriotism. Those who acted and supported the consolidation of Ethiopian patriotism in this war have answered both to justice and the evolution of united civic-territorial based national futures for Ethiopia. The only enduring result from this war is the re-manifestation of Ethiopian unity in the face of sustained hostile attacks by Shabia and Woyanne. The Woyanne found that Ethiopian patriotism, which they attacked so viciously since their inception as "chauvinism", came to their rescue when Shabia attacked them. The opposition should have taken the consolidation of Ethiopian patriotic civic nationalism seriously and tried to articulate its infusion in the polity, economy, society, politics and culture. It was important to listen to the heartbeat of the population. It is a fact now that the population hailing from every corner of the country displayed a unity of body, mind and soul combining intuition, passion, resolution, knowledge and wisdom similar to the way Ethiopians behaved during the Battle of Adwa in 1896.

Varieties of Nationalism: settling the framework of governance on a foundation of Ethiopian citizenship

The national framework for governance should be civic and not ethnic. It should be territorial and not based on blood-ties of groups and communities. Civic-territoriality is the primary principle of political association. Choice of the principle of social arrangement should be based on a holistic idea of the citizen, and not on an exaggeration or conflation of the partial or ethnic attribute of the citizen. The common framework must be based on civic identity and not ethnic identity. Loyalty should be anchored to the land, not to ethnic or blood. Settling the common framework on the national citizen does not mean the denial of the fullest expression of ethnically defined rights. It is exactly to allow that full expression with a structure of coherence and stability that the common framework is necessary to establish and agree upon. The part - an ethnic group - will make difference and partial identities the principle. It can lead to the expansion of difference and fragmentation. It will not provide a common framework for the playing out of equal and different citizens with many primary and secondary identities vying to establish the principles, roles, and norms of the social arrangement. Such a constant agitation to settle an arrangement via ethnic competition is bound to make a common framework be defined and directed by

partial interests thereby injecting the risk of perennial instability into the social arrangement.

The common framework based on a constitution enshrining a regime of rights and obligations freely deliberated upon and negotiated should be based on the principle of enshrining equality of ethnic groups as citizens with different and multiple identities. Equality and difference, freedom and diversity can be fostered better if the civic national framework is established first rather than the priority of the ethnic-genealogical framework, as Woyanne has it. Woyanne has put the cart before the horse, and the consequence of this strategy to Ethiopia's future is yet to come! The civic anchoring to Ethiopia's futures provides coherence and a homogenous legal and political framework from which a regime of rights can be established without diminishing the right to express difference and organise around difference. The latter expression will best be developed and projected within an Ethiopian civic-citizenship framework rather than the partial conception of the citizens as parcelled within ethnic groups. We should express total ambivalence if not outright rejection of the Eurocentric concept of ethnicity. The idea of forming states alias TPLF on the basis of ethnicity is nothing but a confused and contrived amalgam of primordial blood ties with the Eurocentric conception of the nation-state. It must be rejected as a non-issue despite the clamour by various elites to agitate for power and wealth using vernacular agglomerations of a generation or so in the Horn of Africa. There is no alternative to the civic development and future to Ethiopia built upon the confirmation rather than rejection of the history, heritage, tradition, resistance and civilisation of this ancient land.

The opinion that a civic-citizenship framework will not accommodate difference is simply an untenable proposition. The normative preference for a number of ethnic based frameworks undermines the civic basis to citizenship and the rights and obligations flowing from it. When differences expand, it is not equality but new inequalities/hierarchies that will be generated. The suggestion that equality will be established by expanding the politicisation of difference has no empirical and historical substantiation.

Instead of striving to form various nationalisms (e.g. micro, meso, sub-national and supra-national), the most relevant direction should be to clarify the kind of national vision that would express the rights of full citizenship to all without any discrimination to the individual to prey, to speak the language one wants, to eat and express oneself in any life style one has reason to select and value. The real struggle lies in providing Ethiopia's civic-nationalism a new content and significance enriched by the country's sensibility, sense, history and heritage. All the nationalisms that have manifested in Ethiopia have had negative/uncongenial features. The kind of nationalism with positive/creative

features is still to be established. What I describe as “Ethiopian patriotic nationalism,” is that which fosters creative and positive identity and confidence amongst equal but different citizens. It roots Ethiopia in its long traditions, histories, cultures, civilisations and collective memories of resistance. It anchors the nations’ modernisation on the concept of Ethiopia ‘s futures beyond violence and poverty. It should be developed by rejecting the unattractive features of chauvinism, militarism, xenophobia, jingoism and expansionism and hegemonism. It should be built on the principles of the regime of rights and obligations enshrined in a constitution that in turn sustains the civic-national idea by the legitimacy it fosters stressing fraternity, unity, co-operation, dialogue and negotiation than difference and division.

Ethiopian nationalism must not be cut from its historical roots with perhaps the longest collective memory of any known nation on this earth. Only two other civilisations - China and Persia - have as old a civilisation compared to Ethiopia. Ethiopia’s history is not merely a burden; but a treasure and blessing that should be treated and accepted as such. It is from rooting Ethiopia’s modernist aspirations into its history that a future with a more tolerant, humane, accommodating and liberating culture can feed a creative renaissance based on the country’s unique record of survival. The past is not “backward,” that must be de-traditionalised and rejected. It must be affirmed and critically assimilated to build Ethiopia’s own modernities. Thus the past provides rich resources and data for pioneering Ethiopia’s specific modernity. This combination of tradition with civic aspirations specifies a set of institutions imbued with Ethiopia’s own values and identities.

A positive Ethiopian national idea is necessary to counter the manifestation of a variety of sub nationalisms exhibiting unflattering features of war and conflict for decades. The varied sub nationalist manifestations over the last four decades that have been operating in Ethiopia have been invariably all exclusionary and discriminatory. More- over to one degree or another, they all have manifested the following features:

- ❖ ***Chauvinistic*** (showing aggressive hostility to other groups, communities and individuals)
- ❖ ***Xenophobic*** (showing traits of irrational hatred of others not belonging to other communities)
- ❖ ***Militaristic*** (showing a disposition to deal with force rather than engage with or respond to challenges and difficulties, as if force has a premium over other modes of problem/conflict resolution)
- ❖ ***Expansionist*** (exhibiting behaviour to acquire more wealth and power at the expense of neighbouring communities)

- ❖ *Hegemonistic* (the desire to exercise control even over those who are not members of the self-identified groups)
- ❖ *Denial of an Ethiopian national-patriotic agency* (an outright normative rejection of the power of the people to establish the principle of negotiating peacefully and settling an Ethiopian wide and scope civic and territorial positive national identity free from coercion and deception by affirming (and not denigrating) their own history and tradition).

The Ethiopian national idea should be rooted in a manifestation of patriotism to a constitution which protects civic, social, economic and cultural rights, and has thus earned the status and legitimacy to serve as a symbol of national progress, achievement and development. The constitution is a mechanism for the expression and protection of rights with the objective of realising an end and goal of full human development and satisfaction of human needs and aspirations. In the course of fulfilling the end of emancipation, it can acquire metaphysical attributes and authority. It can become gradually a dynamic institution serving to fill in the void that the decline of nation-wide traditional and hybrid authorities such as the church, monarchy, party, army and other partial institutions experienced over the last generation occasioned.

When one looks at the problem to Ethiopia from Tigray and Eritrea, one can trace it to the type of nationalisms which the elite on both sides has propagated through the pressure and blackmail of endless war. What makes the two nationalisms fight each other is the contamination of each by adulterations of chauvinism, xenophobia, militarism, expansionism for power and wealth and jingoism. Though rhetorically they claim to be "liberation" fronts, in reality, they are not progressive. They are stained with the manifestation of rival petty nationalisms capable of allowing the callous slaughter of over 100,000 youth! And we have not seen the end yet.

They share similar conceptions about power and wealth acquisitions; and they come to blows for it. They will always compete even if they say that they can re-establish friendly relations once more. Unless they learn to shed these negative attributes, they will come to blows sooner or later despite the current peace agreement. There is thus an urgent practical need to mobilise Ethiopian civic nationalism and try to put peace making on a sustainable pedigree.

Ethiopian patriotic, constitutional or civic nationalism has to be promoted as an alternative to the fragmentary nationalisms which will continue to be purveyors of violence and poverty not only in Ethiopia but also all those manifesting similar expressions in the entire region of the Horn of Africa.

Peace still remains elusive?

How would the opposition behave when Woyanne's foreign minister exchanges smiles and handshakes with Eritrea's foreign minister and begin a new complicated process called "peace"? Again, during the next phase, the most important principle is to make sure the tricky and deceptive Woyanne does not hoodwink Ethiopians who fought for country and honour. The attempt to dilute or degrade the aroused Ethiopian patriotic mobilisation must be resisted. The opposition can rally and re-unite to capture a new initiative to progress Ethiopia's future on civic-based nationalism in contradistinction to Woyanne's ethnic particularistic sub-nationalism.

The opposition can struggle against the dilution of the Ethiopian spirit, and argue for its role in building the peace in tandem with the forging of the new Ethiopia. Ethiopia must stand tall, as it has always done from time immemorial despite the unending cycle of deprivation and violence. It deserves a just and accountable peace. And this can begin with a truce to stop the violence and prepare the necessary conditions for peace answering to popular aspirations rather than elite manipulations. The population, the army and the opposition should work to make sure Woyanne does not engage in a perfidious assault once more against the consolidation of Ethiopian civic-patriotic nationalism as Woyanne re-forges links with Shabia. Peace can be as difficult as war. All must remain alert. The outcome from this shoddy episode must not sacrifice the rise of Ethiopia's united national purpose. Nothing less has been acceptable during the war; nothing less would be acceptable in the new phase after the signing of the Algiers concord. The opposition should seize the moment, strive to change the problems of war and peace into challenges for building further Ethiopia's national identity, and make the 21st century Ethiopia's time, future and renaissance.

Concluding Remarks: Imagining Ethiopia beyond Violence and Poverty

Ethiopia has suffered from the twin evils of violence and poverty for a long time. With Woyanne in the saddle, there does not seem to be an end to the twin evils that have blocked all progress to Ethiopia. There is a need to confront both violence and poverty. This confrontation can begin with a strong imaging of a non-violent and non-poverty generating future for Ethiopia. The imagination of an alternative to poverty and violence is the first step to make a new Ethiopian future.

The current peace agreement in Algiers will not prevent an eruption of conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia. The Woyanne regime has undermined Ethiopia by a sudden ending of its counter-offensive in the midst of what appeared its success. It is now becoming clear that its goal has been aborted. A large part of the reason appears to do with the U.S. Government pressure to stop the counter-

offensive. It is alarm and fear of potential U.S. (naturally the U.K. too) retaliation that seems to have forced a complete U-turn by the Woyanne elite. They were frightened by the threats specially related to embargoes on travels by officials of the regime. As a consequence, major issues of vital interest to Ethiopia's long-term security and continued survival have been flouted. Though forced into a state of disarray the core of the Eritrean armed forces and leadership have remained intact nursing, no doubt, how to avenge their setback and relative humiliation. Their external alliance with USA and Britain and generally the west and the Arab world has not suffered either.

The other most remarkable defeat for Ethiopia's long-term security structure is the decision to introduce foreign troops. First the Woyanne became agents for partitioning the country between Eritrea and Ethiopia. That defeated Ethiopia's prolonged resistance best exemplified in the epic victory of the battle of Adwa (1896) against Africa's partition that began in the 1890s. And then they waged a full-scale war between the partitioned parts; and to add insult to injury, the two fighting halves invite the service of nearly 4500 troops to protect the "peace agreement" they signed in Algiers. The latter is supposed to monitor armies that are now confronting each other which should together have defended an old historical country from external aggression. They have not only built armies and bought weapons to defend one from the other, but also they both have agreed to invite foreign troops to be stationed in between them. They have chosen to "securitising and militarising" the issue of Eritrea's relation with Ethiopia by the invitation of an external dynamics to their internal relationships. The irony of the situation is immense. These are forces that should have created a joint defence not only to defend each other but also to lay security architecture for such a volatile and unfortunate region. They should be entities both seeking protection from potential and real external security risks.

Perhaps the most striking defeat of Woyanne despite its declared victory is permitting such external forces to enter the region. The country's tradition and psychological make up of seeking independence argues strongly against such invitations. It will make Aste Twedros, Aste Menelik and others who fought to maintain Ethiopia's independence reel in their graves. First the Woyanne disunited the nation. Second they invited foreign troops with the risk of raising the stakes rather than lowering the profile of the fighting and laying the grounds for citizen- anchored peace making.

What is the reason for the readiness of many countries to send troops? Where have these troops helped to solve any problem? What is the political economy for sending peacekeeping forces? Will they make the peace agreement to convert into peace making? By what alchemy can they do this or are known to have done this elsewhere? There is no empirical evidence where such

deployment of troops have ever resolved any conflict. They have not done it in Lebanon, Somalia, Liberia and so on. Why should it work between Eritrea and Ethiopia? I like to be proved wrong but perhaps the introduction of such troops from many countries will spin the conflict out of control. It will allow external powers to intervene more in the affairs of the region and local actors to continue to misunderstand each other. External powers will change the dynamics of the internal conflict. The forces invited are not from Africa only, but also from Europe and elsewhere. What sort of dynamics will be generated with the intervention of so many forces from so many countries? Had the forces been only Africans, one can expect gains against losses to involve Africa's own exertion of its influence and confidence in peacekeeping ventures. There may be benefits which may lead to future integrations. There may be advantages for trade and other inter-regional combinations. Even these advantages do not justify the agreement by Shabia and Woyanne to invite foreign troops to the region. By so choosing to agree, they have unleashed a securitising and militarising logic to their conflict making the issue to pass into the hands of external powers. This is a great shame and defeat to Ethiopia's proud history of upholding independence and national tradition from which there is no easy escape or correction. It is important that all efforts are made to stop the introduction of so called peacekeeping forces from the various regions of the world. Nothing is more urgent than the prevention of entry of these foreign troops.

It is important that Eritrea and Ethiopia take a long-term review of their relationship and allow through a truce or a long-term cease-fire without foreign intervention to re-establish their relationship on a new foundation. Eritrea needs Ethiopia, as Ethiopia needs a corridor to the Sea. Eritrea will have a hard time feeding itself. It is important that Ethiopia understands Eritrea's needs as much as Eritrea should understand Ethiopia's needs. The perspective should be to develop joint defences for each other's security and for both to take an enlightened approach to build durable security architecture for the region. This should be done with minimal or no foreign interference, certainly troops.

As they invite foreign troops, they can decline to invite them. The biggest enemy of Woyanne is Woyanne itself. And like wise the biggest enemy of Shabia is the Shabia itself. They need to realise they are a security threat to each other. The people on both sides, left to themselves, will not lift a finger against each other. They need to spare the region the enormous cost and humiliation of stationing foreign troops by agreeing to not take any more military action for territory or water and enter into a process of negotiation using third parties if necessary to settle all outstanding issues that exist between them.

Paradoxically the stationing of foreign troops far from attenuating the hostilities shows a defeat that further hostilities are to be expected. A truce without foreign troops shows that hostilities will be under control given time for healing. There is a desperate need to imagine and make a violence and poverty free region. And the way that can be attained is through the promotions of visions, principles, movements and resistances that can arrogate power to the very people who die in the wars. That means giving agency back to the people. The opposition can play a role not by engaging in a tit for tat battle to score points against Woyanne or Shabia for this or that step they take; more importantly, it can assist a violent free region by engaging with a comprehensive strategy of education, discernment and resistance against the very conditions which made Woyanne and Shabia to play such games over the lives of the people with such cynicism and carelessness. There is a need to make the opposition deeper and more anchored in a strategy of root-cutting of violence born from the state of poverty, and poverty made wider by the state of violence.

The key to the peace and stability of the region is to establish a regional security structure with joint defence arrangements and resuscitating special relationships (between Eritrea and Ethiopia) based on the understanding and development of an Ethiopian patriotic nationalism with its positive and creative features I outlined above. Unless the ethnic approach to social arrangement in Ethiopia is reversed, and Eritrean leaders continue to nurse the ambition to build further a militarised Eritrean state, the opportunities of erecting a durable and sustainable security architecture would not be available. The issue is not thus settling borders, but one of finding a workable security structure for the region and between Eritrea and Ethiopia. All the region's citizens should be permitted to search for own remedies for the many problems and conflicts that evidently exist. It is not much to ask of Woyanne and Shabia to enter into a long cease-fire or truce voluntarily rather than complicating by adding new and complicated dynamics to their disputes. This is a minimum demand of citizens who wish both Eritrea and Ethiopia well; who are worried by the prospect of exacerbation of the conflict.¹²

This means peacemaking should not be merely in the hands of those who made the war. It should include the opposition, community elders and people from

¹² Apparently the Leader of Eritrea, Issays Afeworki is said to have called Meles Zenawi as "my brother" by agreeing to the Algerian handling of the issue related to their dispute. This was in reference to Meles' suggestion that the issue should not pass to the next OAU chairman who is from Togo. If these persons still can call each other brother after so much blood, tears and sorrow, one sees no explicable logic why they wish to raise the stakes by inviting foreign troops and change the conflict dynamics further! Control and simplify and not expand and complicate – that should be the secret to handle such conflicts amongst intimate local actors!

every walk of life. It is not Italian maps, 1964 OAU resolutions, colonial treaties, and UN troops which should occupy the peacemaking process, but active citizens from within the region who should begin the conversation and dialogue to establish peace and a credible security arrangement. There should be a movement of citizens for peace building. And this movement should try to build bridges amongst the citizens of the region. A movement of resistance for imagining and making the region beyond violence and poverty should be developed from inside and outside the region, amongst friends and allies of the region.

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